

Return to School Update - Aug. 4

Bend-La Pine Schools' Families,

I hope that all of you received our announcement last Friday evening. We know this is a time of tremendous change and I want you to know that we are here to support you as we move forward. Our community faces big challenges to meet the governor's new measures for allowing students to return in person to our schools. In response, we have decided that **all Bend-La Pine Schools' students K-12 will return to school in the fall in a distance-learning format.** In next week's update, we will share more information about these measures and dates for re-evaluation. In addition, we will provide more details about how we'll support students who have special needs.

Options for Returning to School

With this decision, all Bend-La Pine Schools' families have two options for learning: Comprehensive Distance Learning or Bend-La Pine Schools Online. We support families' choices and will provide the best education possible for our students. Families who choose one option can change their plans, as long as there is space available.

Comprehensive Distance Learning

Comprehensive distance learning (CDL) provides the opportunity for teachers, students, and classmates to remain connected and engaged with standard district content materials while working from a distance. Teachers will use live engagement tools such as WebEx (K-12), as well as video and audio recorded lessons, to provide direct, teacher-supervised instruction. Students will use a number of Apps and other resources to extend their learning. In addition, activities and assignments will be posted online or printed for students and families. All instruction will be shared using the learning management systems SeeSaw (K-2), Google Classroom (3-5) and Canvas (6-12). **This option is likely the best choice for families who plan to send their students to schools when they open in the balanced/hybrid model.**

Bend-La Pine Schools Online

Bend-La Pine Schools Online (BLPO) is a long-established virtual education program through Bend-La Pine Schools. The program, which started in 2007, serves thousands of students each year in grades K-12. BLPO serves students who want a full-time online experience or students who just want the option of taking an online class to complement their existing class schedule. Students enrolled in BLPO use prepared content from *K12* and *FuelEd*, depending on their level. BLPO is a separate program from our brick and mortar schools.

For families who want a full-time home learning experience, enrolling in BLPO provides many benefits: comprehensive materials for instruction, online teachers, the loan of an iPad for the duration of the school year, and learning support staff (this will be remote while all schools are closed to students, but it will also be available in person with small groups at district sites once we move to balanced/hybrid instruction.) **This option is likely the best**

choice for families who plan to educate their students from home throughout the school year.

Ongoing Growth in Teaching from a Distance

While staff throughout our district worked hard to support students in a distance learning format last spring, it was a new and sudden experience. Listening to families, students, and staff, as well as studying best practices from around the world, we have learned a great deal about how to provide more consistently strong instruction across classrooms, grades, and schools. Here are some steps we are taking on our journey to enhanced teaching from a distance:

- Required training for all teachers in distance learning tools and optional trainings for those who desire more;
- Teacher-developed “standards of practice” for all grade levels that will establish requirements about student contact time, evaluation and feedback with student work, and opportunities for engagement with classmates, among others;
- Support for families and students in using the district’s learning management systems and other tools; and
- The ability to assign grades in evaluating student work. In the spring, the state restricted grading to Pass/Incomplete; this restriction has been eliminated.

Calendar Change

The decision to have all students K-12 in our schools in a Comprehensive Distance Learning (CDL) model is a big lift for our teachers, administrators, and educational assistants, along with other staff. In order to give them time to prepare and to provide additional training in the tools they will be expected to use, **we are delaying the first day of school for students until Monday, September 14th (from Wednesday, September 9th).** By mid-August, expect your students’ schools to be reaching out with more details about the start of school and with questions about what materials and technology your family might need.

Families, we know our plans present challenges to families. One, of course, is child care for our youngest students. We are working alongside partner organizations to help provide solutions. Please know that we appreciate hearing your questions and concerns, and will respond as soon as possible. Continue to check our [FAQ’s](#) and send additional questions to email askBLS@bend.k12.or.us. I will be reaching out next week with more information.

Lora Nordquist, Interim Superintendent